

ILLINOIS

Tues. Sept. 23, 1980 St. Louis Globe-Democrat 4A

# Sauget site investigated for toxic chemicals

By PATRICIA SZYMCAK  
Globe-Democrat Staff Writer

**SAUGET** — Illinois authorities are investigating a Sauget site where they believe toxic chemicals from a landfill used as a dumping ground for industrial wastes for more than 40 years may endanger the ground water, The Globe-Democrat has learned.

Michael Mauzy, director of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, confirmed his agency is looking into reports that the late Leo Sauget, the first mayor of the town that bears his name, operated an immense landfill southeast of Dead Creek, which is a smoldering, glowing ditch polluted with cancer-causing chemicals and toxic metals.

"There's a better than 50-50 chance something's there," Mauzy told The

Globe-Democrat. "We're taking it very seriously, but we're not going to stick an auger in it and chance hitting something."

EPA SCIENTISTS will release results of an analysis of water samples taken from private wells in the Cahokia end of Dead Creek at a news conference Wednesday.

But, while Mauzy said a favorable finding "will be good news for the private well users, it does not mean that (chemical pollutants) haven't gotten into the ground water.

"We'll be doing more tests later in the Sauget end," near where a 3-acre landfill reportedly was operated south of Queeny Avenue and west of Falling Springs Road from early in the century until the mid-1980s.

Reports of possible dumping of toxic waste at the site allegedly operated by

the former mayor of Monsanto (the town was renamed Sauget in 1988) surfaced following revelations that the dried up Dead Creek nearby contains high levels of, cancer causing PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), pesticides and 20 metals.

**MAUZY TOLD THE Globe-Democrat** the EPA does not know if the dump is the source of the Dead Creek pollution, or if it is a situation the agency will have to treat separately.

"We don't want to be alarmist because we don't know what's there," Mauzy said.

Ann Carr, assistant Illinois attorney general for pollution cases in the southern part of the state, said her office is watching the EPA investigation closely and is prepared to prosecute when the person responsible is found.

The attorney general's office has "a suspect" in the Dead Creek case, but as yet has not begun an investigation of the source of material in the nearby landfill, she said.

"We're talking about a time when people buried the stuff and thought it would all go away," Mrs. Carr said, adding that industries that generated the waste products usually are sued if the dumper cannot be found or is unable to pay.

**SOURCES CLOSE TO the EPA** say the agency may have to use an electronic "treasure hunting" device to determine if large quantities of metal exist below the surface, because of fears that drilling in the area could release toxic wastes that might otherwise remain encased in 55-gallon drums.

EPA officials have no record of a

dump at the site, which was allegedly closed before the General Assembly passed laws requiring landfill operators to register with the state. The first rules governing such registration were passed in 1968 by the Illinois Department of Public Health and are now enforced by EPA.

But, Cahokia firefighters recall numerous blazes near the area in the 1950s and early 1960s that sometimes caused their department to be called to assist Sauget fire officials.

A retired assistant chief of the Cahokia fire department told The Globe-Democrat he responded to fires in a dump south of Queeny Avenue across from what is now the Sauget Village Hall, and once fought a blaze in Dead Creek itself.

"I COULDN'T SAY what it was (burning). But it was something out of

the ordinary," he said. "It was just a nasty hole. The fires were harder to control."

G. Thomas Duffy, a former managing editor of the now defunct Metro-East (East St. Louis) Journal, remembered stories of nearby residents who claimed to have gotten sick from odors wafting across the fields surrounding the landfill.

"There were a great number of objectors to it," Duffy said.

Mrs. Carr said her office has learned that more than one old landfill may exist in the Sauget area, but that report has yet to be confirmed.

Despite repeated efforts by The Globe-Democrat, Paul Sauget, who succeeded his father as mayor of the town, could not be reached for comment Monday.

## Chemical firms asked to supply data on wastes

From The Globe-Democrat  
Jefferson City Bureau

**JEFFERSON CITY** — Gov. Joseph P. Teasdale has asked eight chemical manufacturers to supply information he says would help state officials find abandoned chemical waste dumps.

The firms have been asked to volunteer information on how they have disposed of such wastes in the last 20 years, Teasdale's office announced Monday.

**ST. LOUIS AREA** firms asked to supply the details include Monsanto Co., Mallinckrodt Inc., and Eagle-Picher Industries Inc., Teasdale's office said.

State natural resources director Fred A. Lafferty said the information would help in tracking down illegal dumping.

The firms are asked to outline the type and amount of wastes disposed of, the haulers used and the location of the disposal sites.

Measurable, Teasdale's plan for encouraging the disposal of hazardous chemical wastes by means other than landfills remained nearly intact during initial action in a state Senate committee.

No major changes were made by the Senate Energy Committee Monday in the parts of the Teasdale package that cleared the House last week.

**LAPSE** CALLED the committee's version, which generally makes several technical changes from the House-passed proposal, a balanced approach that appears satisfactory.

One change made by the committee was the substitution of a new tax on waste generators based on volume handled to help finance state regulation of such disposal.

The tax, with a maximum of \$1,000, replaced a House plan to tax only those who dump at landfills.

CER 069555